

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

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R 031430Z DEC 76

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1721

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MOSCOW 18993

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UR, US, XF, PLO

SUBJECT: SOVIET MFA OFFICIAL ON M.E. SITUATION

1. SUMMARY. DURING DEC 3 CONVERSATION ON CURRENT M.E. SITUATION, MFA NEAR EAST COUNTRIES DIVISION COUNSELOR (SYRIA-LEBANON) OLEG GERASIMOV PERESYPKIN:

--STRESSED IMPORTANCE OF UPCOMING PALESTINE NATIONAL COUNCIL DISCUSSION OF PALESTINIAN PARTICIPATION AT GENEVA AND PALESTINIAN STATE, WITH HINTS OF FLEXIBILITY:

--IMPLIED LITTLE PROGRESS ON SOVIET-EGYPTIAN RELATIONS WAS MADE AT GROMYKO-FAHMI MEETING, BUT SAID ANOTHER WOULD BE "LOGICAL;" AND

--EXPRESSED GREAT INTEREST IN ACTIVATION OF SAUDI FOREIGN POLICY INFLUENCE, AND SUSPICION OF U.S. BEHIND-

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THE-SCENES DIRECTION. END SUMMARY.

2. IN TOUR D'HORIZON ON M.E. SITUATION WITH ACTING POL COUNS AND EMBOFF DEC 3, PERESYPKIN STUCKAS CLOSELY AS HE COULD TO SOVIET OCTOBER PROPOSAL, REITERATED AT LAST WEEK'S WARSAW PACT POLITICAL CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE MEETING IN BUCHAREST, BUT MADE FOLLOWING VARIATIONS ON OTHERWISE FAMILAR SOVIET THEMES.

3. ON ISSUE OF PALESTINIAN PARTICIPATION AT GENEVA, PERESYPKIN SAID SOVIET POISITION WAS SET FORTH IN OCTOBER PROPOSAL, BUT THAT PARYICIPANTS THEMSELVES SHOULD DECIDE FORMS OF (NECESSARY) PALESTINIAN PARTICIPATION. ARABS IN SUMMIT ASSEMBLED HAD DECIDED PLO SHOLD REPRESENT APLESTINIANS, BUT VARIOUS IDEAS ON FORMS OF GENEVA PARTICIPATION HAD BEEN PUT FORWARD; HE MENTIONED SEPARATE DELEGATION, BUT ALSO MEMBERSHIP IN JOINT ARAB DELEGATION, OR IN DELEGATION OF INDIVIDUAL ARAB STATES. UPCOMING MEETING OF PALESTINE NATIONAL COUNCIL WOULD CERTAINLY DISCUSS ISSUE, AND WOULD BE VERY IMPORTANT IN THIS REGARD.

4. ANOTHER PROBLEM HE EXPECTED TO COME UP AT COUNCIL, PERESYPKIN SAID, WAS FORM OF PALESTINIAN STATE. PALESTINIAN CHARTER SPECIFIED UNITARY AND INDIVISIBLE NATION; RECENT PALESTINIAN STATEMENTS, ON THE OTHER HAND, SPOKE MAINLY ABOUT A STATE IN THE WEST BANK AND GAZA; AND THERE WAS A CONTRADICTION, WHICH COULD NOT GO UNRESOLVED. AT SAME TIME, HE DID NOT NECESSSARILY EXPECT MODERATION OF PALESTINIAN POSITION TO BE REFLECTED IN FORMAL RESOLUTIONS OF DOCUMENTS OF PNC MEETING: ISSUE WOULD BE "DISCUSSED", BUT IT WAS POSSIBLE NO "DECISIONS" WOULD BE TAKEN.

5. PERESYPKIN PROFESSED NOT TO SEE ANY SERIOUS CHALLENGE TO ARAFAT'S LEADERSHIP OF PLO AT PRESENT TIME. SYRIANS HAD WANTED TO REPLACE HIM, BUT APPEAR TO HAVE DESISTED WITH THE LEBANESE CEASEFIRE AND ARAFAT'S MEETINGS WITH THE SYRIAN LEADERSHIP. THERE IS SIMPLY NO OTHER PALESTINIAN OF ARAFAT'S STATURE AVAILABLE, AND IN FACT HE "ARRANGES" ALL FACTIONS BEST.
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6. ASKED WHAT HE THOUGHT THE SITUATION WOULD LOOK LIKE IF THERE WERE NO REAL MOVEMENT TOWARD A GENERAL SETTLEMENT BY THE END OF 1977, PERESYPKIN APPEARED QUITE RELAXED. IT IS A DANGEROUS SITUATION, HE SAID (AND MADE THE POINT ABOUT THE CLOSENESS OF THE M.E. TO SOVIET BORDERS), BUT THE IMPORTANT THING FOR 1977 IS POLITICAL ACTIVITY. RECONVING GENEVA HAS FIRST PRIORITY,

BUT IF IT DOES NOT BRING PROGRESS, "WE WILL HAVE TO TRY SOMETHING ELSE."

7. ASKED ABOUT SOVIET-EGYPTIAN RELATIONSHIP, PERESYPKIN SAID THERE HAD BEEN LITTLE CHANGE. THE SOFIA MEETING BETWEEN GROMYKO AND FAHMI HAD DEALT MAINLY WITH THE GENEVA CONFERENCE, ALTHOUGH "HERE AND THERE" BILATERAL RELATIONS HAD ALSO FIGURED. THIS WAS NATURAL FOR TWO REASONS. FIRST, AFTER SUCH A PERIOD OF DIFFICULTIES IN THE RELATIONSHIP IT WAS NATURAL FOR THE TWO FOREIGN MINISTERS TO DISCUSS THE BIG ISSUES, LEAVING DETAILS FOR LATER. SECOND, NEITHER HAD BROUGHT THEIR EXPERTS WITH THEM. ANOTHER MEETING, WHICH COULD ENTER INTO DISCUSSION OF DETAIL, WOULD BE "LOGICAL", ALTHOUGH HE KNEW NOTHING SPECIFIC ABOUT ONE.

8. PERESYPKIN FRAMED HIS REMARKS ON SOVIET-EGYPTIAN BILATERAL RELATIONS IN TERMS OF TWENTY YEARS OF CLOSENESS AND SOVIET ASSISTANCE IN ECONOMIC AND MILITARY FIELDS, RUPTURE OF WHICH LEFT EGYPTIANS IN DIFFICULTY BECAUSE IT IS HARD TO CHANGE STRUCTURE. SADAT HAS BEEN GOING LIKE A BEGGAR WITH HIS BOWL AROUND THE PERSIAN GULF STATES, HE SAID, BUT IT HAS NOT PAID OFF, AND NATURALLY IT IS IN HIS INTEREST TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION.

9. ASKED TO ASSESS CURRENT EGYPTIAN PEACE OFFENSIVE, PERESYPKIN RESPONDED WITH GRAVE DOUBTS ABOUT MOTIVES OF SADAT, A "CUNNING,X DEXTEROUS, UNPRINCIPLED POLITICIAN", WHO WILL SAY ANYTHING HE THINKS IS IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST OF THE MOMENT.

10. HIS JUDGEMENT ON QADHAFI WAS ONLY SLIGHTLY MORE CONFIDENTIAL

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ADMIRING: QADHAFI IS VERY EMOTIONAL, AND IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PREDICT WHAT HE WILL DO NEXT. HOWEVER, HE ENJOYS GREAT SUPPORT FORM THE LIBYAN PEOPLE. PERESYPKIN SAID HE DID NOT THINK UPCOMING QADHAFI VISIT TO MOSCW WOULD HAVE NEGATIVE IMPCT ON SOVIET-EGYPTIAN RELATIONS. QADHAFI HAS PECULIAR APPROACH TO SADAT, LIBYAN-EGYPTIAN TENSIONS HAVE THEIR UPS AND DOWNS, AND MOST RECENT SQUABBLE HAS PEAKED. FURTERMORE, EGYPTIANS REALIZE THAT SOVIET UNION IS GREAT POWER, WHICH HAS RELATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS WITH EVERYONE.

11. ASKED ABOUT PURPOSE OF SOVIET TALKS WITH QADHAFI, PERESYPKIN SAID THERE WOULD BE A DISCCUSSION OF THE GENERAL SITUATION IN MIDDLE EAST, AND SOVIET UNION

WOULD EXPLAIN ITS POSITION ON THE GENEVA CONFERENCE.
THE SITUATION IN LEBANON WOULD ALSO BE DISCUSSED. SOVIETS
COULD NOT UNDERSTAND RECENT QADHAFI DECISION TO WITHDRAW
LIBYAN CONTINGENT IN LEBANON, ALTHOUGH OF COURSE IT WAS
UP TO LIBYANS TO MAKE THEIR OWN POLICY. ONE ISSUE SEEMED
TO BE TAKING BACK ARMS LIBYANS HAD GIVEN PALESTINIANS.
FINALLY, PERESYPKIN SAID, BILATERAL RELATIONS, INCLUDING
ECONOMIC COOPERATION, WOULD BE DISCUSSED.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 MOSCOW 18993

12. PERESYPKIN CONCLUDED WITH RATHER RAMBLING EXPOSI-
TION ON SAUDI ARABIA'S INVIGORATED FOREIGN POLICY LEAD-
ERSHIP ROLE. INCREASING SAUDI INFLUENCE SEEMED TO BE
BASED PARTLY ON MONEY, AND PARTLY ON REAL DESIRE TO BRING
ALL ARABS TOGETHER WHICH WAS ATTRACTIVE TO OTHER ARABS.
SAUDI LEADERSHIP WAS CLEARLY EVIDENT IN BRINGING ABOUT
LEBANESE CEASEFIRE, AND SAUDIS WERE ALSO WORKING ON

SYRIAN-EGYPTIAN AND LIBYAN-SUDAN RECONCILIATION. AT SAME TIME, THEY HAD PROBLEMS OF VARIOUS KINDS WITH ALMOST ALL OF THE NEIGHBORS, EXCEPT WITH OMAN (WHICH HAD BEEN RESOLVED). SOVIETS FOUND IT HARD TO ASSESS SAUDIS, PERESYPKIN SAID, SINCE TWO COUNTRIES HAVE HAD NO CONTACTS FOR SO LONG. BUT U.S. CLEARLY HAD GREAT INFLUENCE WITH SAUDIES HE SAID.

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13. ASKED ABOUT ANTI-SAUDI ARTICLE IN NOVEMBER 26 NOVOYE VREMYA, PERESYPKIN SLID OFF INTO LENGTHY DISCUSSION OF HISTORY OF SOVIET-SAUDI RELATIONS SINCE OCTOBER REVOLUTION, CONCLUDING SOMEWHAT WISTFULLY THAT SOVIETS NOW SPOKE TO SAUDIS DIRECTLY ONLY AT UN, AND THEN ONLY ON MULTILATERAL ISSUES. THERE HAD BEEN ONLY ONE SOVIET IN SAUDI ARABIA IN LAST DECADE, A CORRESPONDENT, AND NONE IN LAST FIVE YEARS, AND THIS DESPITE THE FACT THAT SAUDI ARABIA HAD BEEN FIRST ARAB COUNTRY TO RECOGNIZE THE NEW SOVIET STATE AND THE FIRST IN WHICH THE SOVIETS HAD REPRESENTATION, BETWEEN THE WARS.

14. COMMENT. EMBASSY IS INCLINED TO DOUBT THAT SOVIET ATTITUDE TOWARD GENEVA CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION IS QUITE SO FLEXIBLE AS PERESYPKIN'S REMARKS SUGGEST, ALTHOUGH THEY TRACK WITH RECENT INDICATIONS FROM SOVIETS THAT MOSCOW CAN LIVE WITH WHATEVER SOLUTION TO PARTICIPATION PROBLEMS ARABS COME UP WITH SO LONG AS PLO IS INCLUDED. IN THIS REGARD PERESYPKIN'S REMARKS ABOUT POSSIBILITY OF MORE MODERATE LINE EMERGING AT CAIRO PNC MEETING MAY SUGGEST DIRECTION OF SOVIET HOPES, IF NOT SOVIET POLICY. THRUST COINCIDES WITH THAT OF OTHER REMARKS WE HAVE HEARD HERE RECENTLY, INCLUDING THOSE BY AFRICA INSTITUTE'S HOUSE EXPERT ON PALESTINIANS (NOVEMBER 12 MEMCON).
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